

ARAB-ISRAELI PACKAGE

In introducing this subject, the Chairman could note that the item was designed partly in response to particular interest in the subject by Mr. Ellsworth, but mainly as a device to encourage a closer examination of the worth of KIQ Strategy Reports as such. Does the Group consider that the Strategy Reports are focussing on the right subquestions? Belaboring the obvious? Missing anything significant?

And does this SNIE, as just one example of a major paper issued in the wake of these Strategy Reports, look any better (or worse) than it might if there had been no Strategy Reports at all?

(The Chairman has at his place a draft RONI submission on the Middle East during the period February-March-April. He could use it to expand on the introductory remarks -- e.g., to put the rather startling Major Conclusions of the SNIE in better perspective -- or he could draw upon it in the discussion. The most interesting parts of the RONI submission are on the first two pages, inside the red margins. Since the RONI does not circulate to the Working Group, the paper could be described simply as an internal IC Staff memo, which technically it still is, in this form).

DIA and DOS review(s) completed.

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5 May 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Product Review Division

SUBJECT: RONI: Middle East

1. Three major events--all occurring in March--dominated the Middle East scene this review period: the breakdown of the step-by-step negotiations and its impact on Arab-Israeli plans and intentions; the assassination of King Faisal and the ensuing leadership shuffle within the Saudi government; and the collapse of the Kurdish rebellion following the Iran-Iraq accord and the Shah's withdrawal of support. These and a number of other developments were thoroughly and, in general, excellently covered and analyzed in current intelligence publications, particularly the NIB and NID.

2. All three daily publications continued to provide timely information on the status and activity of Arab-Israeli military forces. Of particular value were the biweekly NID reports, based on PHOTINT, of violations in the Israeli-Egyptian-Syrian disengagement areas. But the judiciousness and restraint which characterized reporting on the war or peace issue in December and January was seldom in evidence this review period. Indeed, both current and estimative reporting on the likelihood of hostilities sounded a tone that was at times alarmist and presented judgments that were often contradictory and confusing. The following excerpts from reports issued over a five-week period--predicting alternately high and low probability of hostilities--illustrate the community's perplexity:

Excerpts
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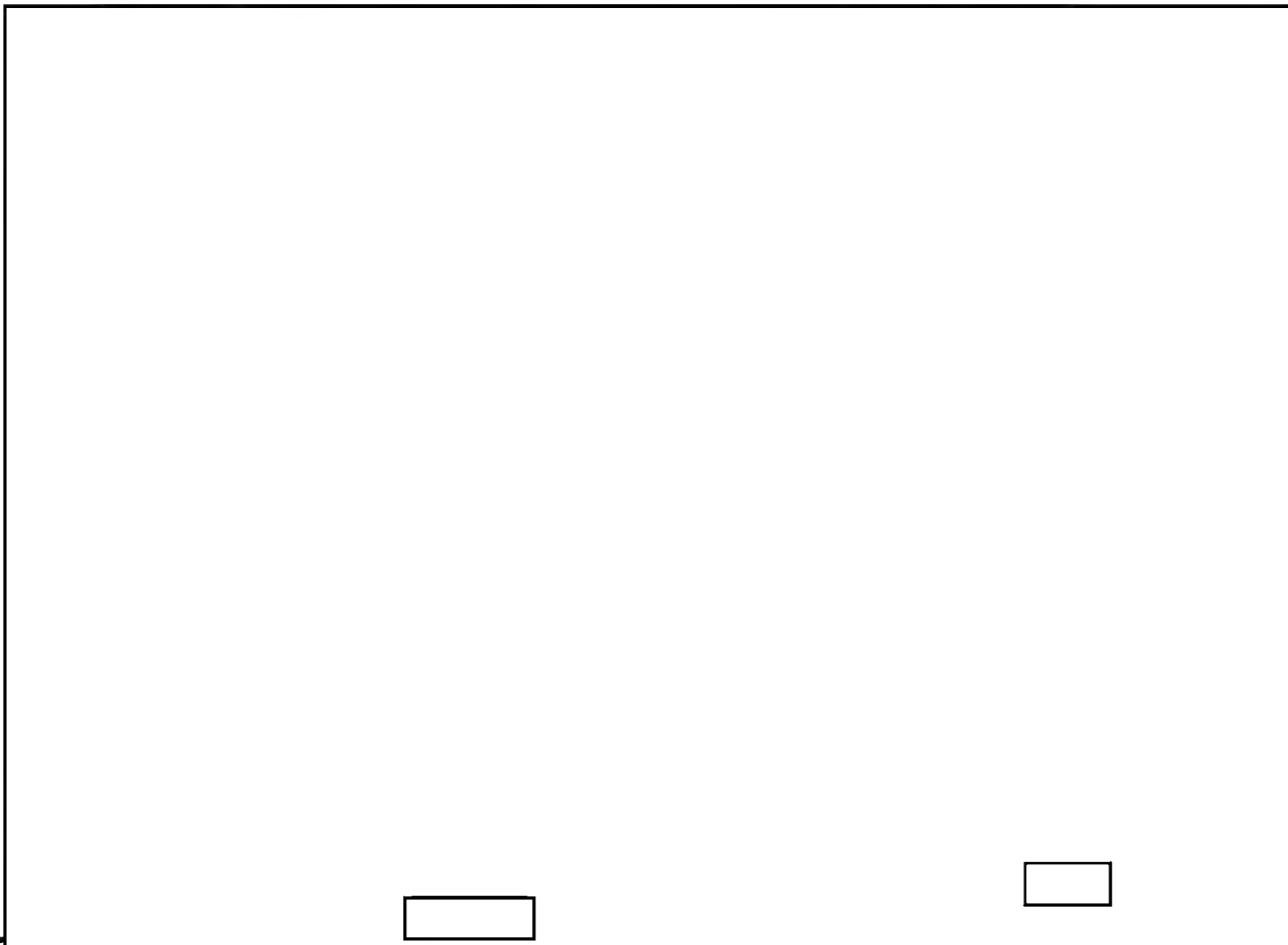
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--4 April: "The odds...are...approximately two to one against the likelihood of a major Arab-Israeli conflict in the next month."--Interagency Intelligence Report

Obviously, intelligence reporting was devoting sufficient attention to KIQ 37: What are Arab and Israeli military plans and intentions? But such conflicting estimates only served to convince the consumer of the community's lack of prescience on this vital subject and detract from its credibility.

3. But aside from Arab-Israeli intentions, both daily and weekly current intelligence publications were particularly astute in their analysis of the overall Middle East political environment and contributed importantly to the Key Intelligence Questions. Most notable and of direct policy interest were the many excellent articles focusing on the triangular interplay among Egypt, Israel and Syria and each, in turn, in its relations with the PLO and the super powers. The community also demonstrated a remarkable ability to react quickly to fast-breaking developments. For example, on March 26--only one day after King Faisal's assassination--the NID carried three excellent articles dealing with

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the succession of power within the Saudi government including illuminating profiles on both King Khalid and Crown Prince Fahd and their likely roles in the new regime. The Saudi succession issue was also well covered in the NIB of that date and a comprehensive and--for a weekly publication--a surprisingly timely piece on the same subject appeared in the March 26 issue of State's "Current Foreign Relations."

4. As in the last review period, the NID published roughly twice as many articles on the Middle East as the NIB. Moreover, all of the NIB articles--except for an occasional item on, say, arms deliveries or the like--also appeared with only minor editorial changes in the NID, usually the same day. Stated another way, nearly half the articles in the NID were unique. In both publications, quality of reporting was high, area coverage well-balanced and topics and developments carefully selected and edited for national-level readership. As an example, an article in the NID of 20 March reporting on the increase in anti-regime activity in Iran (which also appeared in the NIB on 2 April) was apparently a condensation of a longer and very thorough piece on this subject published as a DIA Intelligence Appraisal on 30 March. Both the NID and NIB articles viewed the increased activity as a portent of further terrorist acts against Iranian security officials and installations, but avoided the Intelligence Appraisal's warning that the activity "could ultimately lead to the assassination or overthrow of the Shah." The percentage of strictly reportorial items was small and there were surprisingly few articles of marginal interest. The volume of production was generally the same as the previous review period, however, reporting on Iran and Iraq increased while reporting on Israel declined.

5. A number of outstanding articles appeared in the daily publications, among them 7 March NIB and NID items on the Iran-Iraq conciliation accord which alluded, apparently accurately, to the likelihood of a "secret agreement" on the Kurdish issue; a feature article by [] in the NID of 12 March on the United Arab Emirates; an 18 March NID article by [] detailing the Shah's political and economic efforts to make Iran into a world power; and [] account 25X1A9A in the NID of 26 March on "Why the Israelis Want Increased U.S. Assistance"--especially relevant in view of the reassessment of U.S. policy.

6. The executive reader who has time for only one current intelligence publication a week, would be well-advised to select OCI's superb Weekly Review. The Review offers a succinct yet unusually comprehensive analysis of the week's major developments presented in a crisp, easy-to-read reporting style. Middle East coverage was good. Two or three articles on the average appeared in each edition and the total count for the area during the period was 33. The focus was indeed, as the editors stated, on significant developments; the routine and trivial were avoided. More importantly, the Review was not a mere retelling of events already published in the dailies. Its greater time span enabled it to tie together related developments, reexamine them with fresh insight and place the entire story into perspective for better understanding. The Weekly Review thus brings a unique and valuable dimension to current intelligence reporting and does so with admirable clarity and economy of words.

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7. DIA's Weekly Intelligence Summary, supposedly providing highlights of the week by geographical area, unfortunately offers the reader neither a "summary" nor any "highlights" of the week's current events. Instead, it is largely a collection of special feature articles on subjects of rather limited military interest such as the use of new bridging equipment by Syrian forces and the acquisition of TOW Anti-tank missiles by Israel. Despite a body of current alert and warning intelligence produced by DIA in March on mounting Arab-Israeli tensions and the increased likelihood of hostilities, the agency's Weekly Summaries omitted any reference to the Arab-Israeli situation during the entire three-month period. The 28 March Summary did feature a useful and unique analysis on the decline of Palestinian terrorism in 1974 (a version of which was also published as an 8 March DIA Intelligence Appraisal) but an historical in-depth summary such as this hardly qualifies for what purports to be a current intelligence publication.

8. Supplementing current intelligence reporting during this period were a number of estimative and special studies.

--An Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, dated 6 March, examining "Gaps in Egypt's Military Inventory and the Effects on Its Wartime Capabilities" would have benefited from some specific assessment of Egyptian intentions. Instead, it merely implies (correctly or not) in its judgment--"vis-a-vis Israel...Egyptian armed forces are weaker than in October 1973 due to the increase in IDF inventories and capabilities"--that Sadat would not be likely to go to war because of his country's military inferiority.

--A SNIE of 27 March on "Next Steps in the Middle East," as mentioned earlier, fell victim to the recent alarmism in the community on the likelihood of hostilities. It was also less than prescient in its judgment that an Egyptian decision to extend the UN mandate "would be unlikely...if a date for the Geneva Conference had not yet been set."

--An Intelligence Memorandum, dated 9 April 1975, entitled "A Coming of Age: The Foreign Policy of Anwar Sadat" provided an excellent political profile of the Egyptian leader and his goals against a background of Arab and world affairs.

--DIA Intelligence Appraisals on "The Palestinian Connection: Lebanon's National Security Problem" (18 February); "Capabilities of the Israeli Air Force" (10 April); and "Limitations in Iranian Ground Force Capabilities" (15 April) were useful and definitive military studies. However, all three reports received very wide dissemination and one might reasonably question what mission-

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related value this intelligence has to such recipients as
Commander, U.S. Forces, Korea; Commander in Chief, Southern
Command; and Commander, U.S. Taiwan Defense Command.

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